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ABSTRACT

This guide to the legislative process provides information on how to work within the legislative process for changes benefiting children and families. The guide is divided into 5 major sections: (1) know the issues and know the state and congressional legislative systems; (2) know how to express an opinion; (3) communications from non-profit groups; (4) know the federal legislative process; and (5) understand authorizations and appropriations. Specifically, the guide provides information on: (1) the power of personal visits, letters, telephone calls, telegrams, and voting; (2) the House of Representatives and the Senate; and (3) budget requests, budget authorizations, review and approval processes, Subcommittee and Committee hearings, floor action, the House and Senate Conference, and appropriations. A glossary of terms is included. (JW)

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HELPING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES THROUGH LEGISLATIVE ACTIVISM

A GUIDE TO THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

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HELPING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES THROUGH LEGISLATIVE ACTIVISM

A GUIDE TO THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

by

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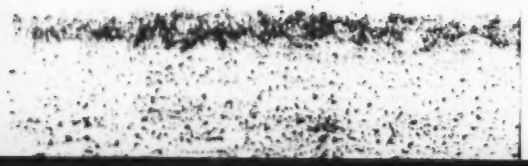
The contents of this publication are based on the philosophical approach and standards of the American Humane Association and represent the accumulated knowledge and experience of its authors.



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HELPING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES THROUGH LEGISLATIVE ACTIVISM:

A GUIDE TO THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

During most of the first half of this century, the protection of children was initiated through the efforts of local, private, non-profit societies for the prevention of cruelty to children. There were more than 250 such societies in the 1920's acting as a catalyst to bring resources to families and protection through the courts to the children involved in abuse and neglect. Gradually, public social services agencies began to take on more of this responsibility.

The decade of the 1960's was one of major development in our country's response to child maltreatment. Due to efforts of child welfare professionals along with the medical community's recognition and publicizing of the "battered child syndrome," reporting laws were passed in every state. These laws obligated professionals who work with children and families, as well as ordinary citizens, to report child abuse or neglect to local departments of social services.

The framework of federal laws supporting public policies for responding to abused and neglected children and their families grew substantially in the 1970s and 1980s. The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (Public Law 93-247) passed in 1974 and regularly revised and updated, ties federal funds allocated to states to the presence of systems of identification, reporting, and response to child abuse and neglect. The Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (Public Law 95-608) emphasizes the role of Native American families and tribal organizations in the decision making around the protective needs and placement of their children and mandates on state courts to preserve the integrity and unity of these families.

The Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 (Public Law 96-272) ties federal foster care funding to the implementation of policies related to family preservation and permanency planning for children. Caseworkers and courts are now obligated to demonstrate and certify that "reasonable efforts" were made to preserve families before children can be placed in foster care or made eligible for adoption.

Thus, although each state has a law or laws defining child maltreatment, reporting responsibilities, and procedures as well as the overall purpose, focus, and organization of child protective services in the state, the federal role in establishing policy direction has become increasingly important. With passage of the Family Preservation and Family Support Services legislation as part of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993, $1 billion in federal funds will be available over the next five years for early support services to prevent child abuse and neglect, and for intensive support services to stem the out-of-home placement of children from families in crisis. Whenever there is a new direction in federal policy, it is as a result of communication from the field to government officials on the importance of community supports to families' efforts to effectively raise their children.

Constituent pressure is one of the most important influences on the activities and votes of Senators and Representatives. You have a chance to become actively involved in the legislative process through lobbying your elected representatives and letting them know how you feel about certain issues.

Communication is essential for our representative form of government to work. Our elected officials communicate with us through newsletters, speeches, debates, in the mass media, and by how they vote in the Congress.

Our obligation is to communicate to them through letters, telephone calls, personal contact, and by voting. You need to let them know what you expect of them when an issue comes up that you care about.

When you become a member of the American Humane Association, you will know that AHA is actively involved in representing your interests in Washington, D.C. No matter how effective AHA is in representing your views, your help is needed. Your personal communication to the Congress or Executive Branch will underscore and emphasize the validity of what AHA is saying.

Remember, our elected officials are our instruments. You must communicate to them what it is you want them to do. You have elected them and they are answerable to you for their actions. If you expect to be represented, you need to express your opinions and viewpoints.

This guide is designed to help you understand the legislative process and how to effectively communicate your views to those who represent you in Congress.

Know The Issues

Each issue of ***Protecting Children***, the journal of the Children's Division of the American Humane Association, contains a "Washington Update" that highlights legislation currently in Congress that affects children and families, with more in-depth reports on important legislation. American Humane also, from time to time, issues **Legislative Alerts** when legislation has reached a crucial point where constituent letters and contacts can make a significant difference for success. If you need more information on an issue, write or call our Washington, DC office at:

322 Massachusetts Ave., NE
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 543-7780
FAX: 202-546-3266

KNOW YOUR STATE LEGISLATIVE SYSTEM

Most of this guide is devoted to helping you understand the legislative process at the national level. However, many important actions on behalf of children and families are taken in state legislatures. For that reason, it is also important that you understand the legislative process in your state and to communicate your views to your state legislators.

Although a complete discussion of the operation of the legislatures in the 50 states and U.S. territories is beyond the scope of this guide, you can locate information on who are your state representatives through your local League of Women Voters organization and use the means suggested here — personal visits, letters, telephone calls, and voting —to communicate with your state legislators.

You may find it effective to join with other child advocates in your community to monitor legislative actions and communicate your views on how they will affect local children and families. Most state legislatures have committees which specifically direct their attention to children and family issues, and which can therefore serve as a focal point for your efforts and communications. Occasionally, American Humane's *Protecting Children* journal also reports on state legislative initiatives for children and families.

KNOW THE CONGRESSIONAL SYSTEM

The United States Congress consists of two bodies:

- the Senate, and
- the House of Representatives.

Senators represent states - each state elects two Senators who each serve a six-year term of office.

Each state is broken into districts which elect Representatives to the House. Districts are designed to contain a certain population of citizens, so a sparsely populated state might only have one or two districts, while a highly populated state could have 50 or more districts. Representatives serve a two-year term of office.

If you don't know who your elected officials are, you can find out by contacting your local library, your local League of Women Voters office or American Humane.

Both the Senate and the House of Representatives work through a number of committees which specialize in certain areas of legislation. An example would be the House Committee on Ways and Means, which has a number of Subcommittees including the Subcommittee on Human Resources, and the Subcommittee on Health.

It is important to find out on which Committees and Subcommittees your representatives serve. You can get this information by contacting his/her office directly. If your Representatives or Senators are Chairpersons or Ranking Members of a Committee or Subcommittee, they have more leverage on issues that come before their respective committees.

Additionally, Federal Agencies such as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services can make or break a law by the regulations they write and the enforcement policies they implement. **The regulatory phase is very important.** All our efforts in passing legislation to protect children and strengthen families can be for naught if the regulations are not written in compliance.

The appropriations phase is equally important. Unless Congress appropriates enough money in the budget to pay for programs and staff, the child protection laws will not be adequately enforced.

Each year, there should be thirteen separate appropriations bills. However, sometimes, because of the crowded legislative calendar, when the fiscal year begins, those appropriations not yet

enacted are wrapped together in a Continuing Resolution which is a stop-gap temporary measure.

Know How To Express Your Opinion

Personal Visits

A personal visit with your Senator or Representative in his or her office in Washington or District office is well worth your time and effort.

Make an appointment with your elected official by mail or phone with as much advance notice as possible. The scheduling secretary will make the appointment for you. Make the appointment for a specific amount of time and tell the scheduler what it is you wish to discuss.

If your Senator or Representative can not meet with you, make the appointment with the legislative staff assistant who handles the issue with which you are concerned.

Be certain that you are on time for the appointment. Make the appointment as brief as possible and limit the group of visitors to no more than three people.

Your object is a friendly conversation, not a confrontation. Don't make a bitter enemy of a legislator because you disagree on an issue. That legislator may agree with you on other issues in the future.

Be brief and to the point. Identify yourself and who you represent, what your organization does and what it stands for as well as the number of members it has.

Explain your position ("we support this legislation and urge you to vote for it" or "we oppose this legislation and urge you to vote against it.")

Give examples to support your views. Leave written materials on the issues for the Senator or Representative and his or her staff to read after your visit.

Always be honest. Don't try to be more of an expert than you are. If you are asked a question about an issue and don't know the answer, say so and then offer to find out. Always feel free to invite your elected officials to visit your agency, children's program or speak at an organization to which you belong. These visits can be made during "recess" or "district work periods" which are frequent throughout the year.

Always follow-up with a thank you letter to the elected official and the staff member.

Letters

The letter is the most widely used form of communication. Mail is a focal point for the legislator and his or her staff.

Every letter that comes into a congressional office is read and responded to. Many times it is the "mail count" which determines the way a legislator will vote on an issue.

If you write to a member of a committee, always send a copy to your legislator as well.

All letters to members of the **House of Representatives** should be addressed as in the following examples:

Honorable (full name)
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative (last name):

All letters to members of the **Senate** should be addressed to:

Senator (full name)
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator (last name):

The following guidelines will help you write an effective letter:

- Clearly state who you are and what organization, if any, you represent.
- State the purpose of your letter as clearly as possible, include the bill number and name. Example: H.R. 727, The Children and Pregnant Women Health Insurance Act of 1993.
- Add any additional facts, statistics, or newspaper clippings pertinent to the issue.
- Discuss how the bill may affect your locality or state.
- Highlight any expertise you may have.
- Offer reasonable alternatives to problem situations when appropriate.
- Ask your legislator to specifically state his or her position on the issue in response to your letter.
- Be sure to thank your legislator for past positive activity on behalf of children and families.
- Be sure to sign your name at the bottom of the letter legibly with a legible return address.
- Because responses from Congress will assist AHA in determining which Members of Congress will be most helpful in

supporting our position, please send copies of all correspondence to the Washington office of American Humane at: 322 Massachusetts Avenue, N.E., Washington, DC 20002-5702 or call (202) 543-7780 if you have any questions.

There are also some important "don'ts":

- Do not be rude or threatening.
- Do not berate your Congressperson.
- Do not pretend to wield vast political influence.
- Do not become a constant "pen pal" writing on every issue being considered.
- Do not demand a commitment before the facts are in.
- Do not write to a Member from another district or state because you disagree politically with your Representative.

Form letters are the least effective way to communicate. However, if time is of the essence and you have no other means available, then send a form letter because even this means of communication is better than no communication at all.

Telephone Calls

These can be very effective when used for:

- Urging your legislators to vote on a bill that is currently being debated on the House or Senate floor.
- Requesting a copy of a specific bill or to find out the status of a bill.
- Finding out his or her position on a specific bill.
- Thanking him or her for specific actions or votes.

Remember, if the legislator is not available, the legislative staff assistant for an issue is also effective.

TELEGRAMS

Western Union has introduced the Personal Opinion Telegram which is designed to cut through piles of letters and reach the hands of key legislators and their aides. According to the telegraph company, a simple call to Western Union's toll-free number sets the Personal Telegram in motion and within hours, messages are delivered directly to the office of any Washington lawmaker - Senator, Representative, or even the President. Because it is a specialized telegram, it may get noticed before mailed messages.

All you have to do is call **1-800-325-6000**, a 24-hour number, and state your message and who should receive it. Your message will be delivered within two hours, and costs less than a telegram. The charge is $9.95 for a 20 word message (additional 20 words or less cost $3.75) and special rates are available for sending identical messages at the same time to everyone in Congress. Another advantage of the Personal Opinion Telegram is timeliness. Often the movement of a bill through Congress is exceedingly slow, however, a crucial vote on the issue will then be scheduled on very short notice. A letter might not reach your representative in time, but a telegram could be in his or her office the same morning it is sent.

It is hard not to overstate the importance of public support in getting legislation affecting children and families passed. You can be sure the competition, those who wish to spend money on competing programs, is very vocal and communicates frequently with the government. To fight back, we need to be just as vocal and use every tool at our disposal to get our message across.

VOTING

Perhaps the most important way to "send a message" to your elected representatives is to use your right to vote. Ask legislators how they voted on bills affecting children and families. Ask candidates where they stand on important children's issues. Use your vote to support the candidate that best represents your views. If you can work as a volunteer in a political campaign, or donate to your chosen candidate's campaign chest, your views may receive more attention when you write or call on these issues.

A WORD ABOUT COMMUNICATIONS FROM NON-PROFIT GROUPS

Many people are under the mistaken impression that private, non-profit, charitable, and educational groups that are exempt from federal taxes under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code are legally prohibited from engaging in "lobbying" activities. **This is not the case.**

These groups are specifically permitted to lobby; federal law only imposes limits on the amount of lobbying they may do, and prohibits most use of federal funds for lobbying activities. This guide cannot discuss all of the specific rules that apply to non-profit organizations, but you should know that as a 501(c)(3) organization that you are not prohibited from contacting your legislator from time to time to express your views on issues important to vulnerable children and families.

Nor are you, as an employee of such an organization, restricted from communicating your opinion as a private citizen. You can make it clear that you are acting as a private individual by writing or telephoning your legislators in your own name, on your own time, using your personal letterhead and other materials. Specific rules may also apply at the local and state level to non-profit groups, and you should verify those rules locally.

KNOW THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

Following is a brief guide to the Federal Legislative process — the obstacle course for any piece of legislation. A bill must get through both the House and the Senate in order for it to become law. The process is similar in both Chambers.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

- Any Representative may introduce any bill he or she sees fit. When introduced, the bill is assigned a number and is sent to one or more Committees which have jurisdiction over the bill's subject matter. The Committee Chair usually refers it to a Subcommittee.

- The Subcommittee Chair decides whether or not the Subcommittee will consider the bill and when. At this step, it is useful to lobby the Subcommittee Chair and the Subcommittee members for hearings on the bill. If the Subcommittee Chair decides to hold hearings, his or her staff plans them. (Although testifying witnesses are invited by the staff, any organization or individual may submit a statement for the printed Record of the hearings.)

- The next step is what is called the "mark-up", the Subcommittee session in which the bill is discussed and voted on by the Subcommittee members. It is important to lobby Members of the Subcommittee before mark-up.

- If the bill is approved, it is "reported out" to the full Committee. The Committee Chair decides whether and when to consider the bill in the full Committee. At this step, it is useful to lobby the Committee. If the Committee Chair decides to hold hearings, his or her staff plans them. Again, although testifying witnesses are invited by the staff, any organization or individual may submit a statement for the printed Record of the hearing.

- The next step is the **full** Committee mark-up, the Committee session in which the bill is discussed and voted on by the Committee members. It is important to lobby Members of the Committee before mark-up. If the bill is approved, it is "reported out" to the House.

- It then goes to the Rules Committee where it is decided which rules for debate and discussion will be used when the bill is considered on the House floor.

- The bill then goes to the House floor for a vote. It is important to lobby Members before this vote.

SENATE

When the Senate completes a similar process with the Senate version of the bill, the House and Senate bills are sent to a Conference Committee with representatives from both Chambers to reconcile any differences in the House and Senate bills. The conferees are selected each time by the Speaker of the House and the Presiding Officer of the Senate. It is useful to lobby the conferees before the Conference Committee meets.

If differences are resolved, a Conference Report is sent back to each Chamber for approval. If the Conference Report is approved, the bill is sent to the President to be signed. If the President vetoes the bill, the veto may be overridden by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of each Chamber. It would be important to lobby for your position before this vote.

AUTHORIZATIONS AND APPROPRIATIONS

BUDGET REQUESTS

All departments, agencies, and other independent units of the Federal government receive budgeted funds to conduct their activity during the year. Some of the money is spent "internally" (administration and in-house programs) and some is spent "externally" (funding grants and contracts for activities carried out by other organizations.)

Budgets are determined on an annual basis. The government operates on a fiscal year from October 1 to September 30 (rather than on a calendar year from January 1 to December 31). So reference to Fiscal Year 1995 (FY'95) means the budget year from October 1, 1994 to September 30, 1995.

The written request for a given budget always originates in the Executive Branch of the agency where the money is to be spent. Each Department of the Agency formulates its own request and then sends it to the President through the Office of Management and Budget for review and approval. The review and approval process is imperative since agencies usually pad their request in the almost certain knowledge that some cuts will be made, sometimes for the purely political purpose of showing that the President is running a tight ship.

Sometimes, with political factors in mind, the President issues budget guidelines before agency budget preparation begins. This is most likely in the case of high visibility issues such as, defense, which have high public interest. Some lesser-known budgets go almost unnoticed because they do not have a large voting constituency or active lobby either for or against the issue. Lobbyists can have impact at this stage as well as others in the process.

When the budget requests are modified and approved, they are included in the President's budget recommendation which

is formally presented to Congress in January of each year.

When the President's budget recommendations come to Congress, they are reviewed by two types of committees:

(1) Authorizing (or legislative) Committees, and

(2) Appropriations Committees.

If the President wants to create a new agency, provide funds for a program whose authorization is about to expire or require that funds be used in ways not specified in existing law, the recommendation first goes to an authorizing committee. After program changes are authorized, appropriations committees must approve the money requested before any dollars can be spent.

There are some exceptions in that a few authorizing committees have direct spending authority for certain entitlement programs, but these are clearly exceptions.

Before the late 1950s, authorizing committees would create new programs indefinitely or at least for a period of several years. The authorization would state "such sums as may be necessary" should be appropriated, allowing the Appropriations Committees to decide the dollar amount. Authorizing Committees would review each program under their jurisdiction once every two to five years. In recent years, however, the trend has been to authorize each program annually.

Legislators and lobbyists must work both the authorization and appropriations cycle if they want to support a given program or stop one.

BUDGET AUTHORIZATIONS

Each part of the Federal budget comes under the jurisdiction of a specific legislative authorizing committee in the House and a specific legislative authorizing committee in the Senate.
The House Authorization Committees are:

- Agriculture
- Appropriations
- Armed Services
- Banking and Financial Services
- Budget Committee
- Commerce
- Economic and Educational Opportunities
- Government Reform and Oversight
- International Relations
- Judiciary
- National Security
- Resources
- Rules
- Science
- Small Business
- Transportation and Infrastructure
- Veterans' Affairs
- Ways and Means

These are also the committees legislation goes to when it is introduced.

The Senate Authorization Committees are:

- Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
- Appropriations
- Armed Services
- Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs
- Budget
- Commerce, Science and Transportation
- Energy and Natural Resources
- Environment and Public Works
- Finance

- Foreign Relations
- Governmental Affairs
- Judiciary
- Labor and Human Resources
- Rules and Administration
- Small Business
- Veterans Affairs.

When the President's budget is forwarded to Congress, it is broken into pieces, with relevant committees taking review and approval responsibility. The House and Senate, simultaneously but separately, prepare their own authorization bills.

Because Committee jurisdictions are broad, the budget request is further broken down into pieces which are assigned to various subcommittees

The review and approval process is as follows:

(1) Subcommittee and Committee Hearings

Generally, the Chair of the full Committee and the Chair of the relevant Subcommittee begin the process by planning how and when the budget review will take place. Their goal is to bring an Authorization bill before the Congress as a whole for a formal vote of approval. This Committee action, recommending a budget for specified programs to the floor, is called "reporting out" which means having a Committee Report recommending specific actions to the Congress.

Frequently, hearings are scheduled to review the budget or obtain information. During the Hearings, invited witnesses speak on behalf of, or in opposition to, the request. The Committee or Subcommittee Chair controls who will appear and when they will appear. A friendly Chairperson can protect portions of a bill while an unfriendly Chairperson can severely limit the chances of passage.

During the hearings, the invited witnesses present prepared formal statements and then respond to questions by the Com-

mittee Members. Since Hearings are open to the public and press, the question and answer sessions serve to bring public attention to an issue as well as clarify certain aspects of the proposed program. The hearings are considered legal, sworn testimony, meaning that witnesses are subject to contempt charges for deliberate errors in their presentation and answers.

Following the Hearing, the Subcommittee (and then the full Committee) meets for one or more "mark-up" sessions which are frequently closed to the public. During these sessions, changes (amendments) are offered by Members and voted on. In this way, the details of the budget are determined.

A printed report is issued by each Authorization Committee detailing their findings, rationale and specific budget recommendations on a line-item by line-item basis. The Report, as printed for use on the Floor, has the approval of a majority of the Committee. It may also contain minority views and recommendations. The Report may be endorsed or contested by the President, since it usually reflects some large or small difference from his original recommendation to Congress.

(2) Floor Action

When bills reach the House or Senate floor, they are open for debate and action by the Membership as a whole. Trivial or substantive and comprehensive amendments may be offered, debated, and voted on. The body then approves that specific authorization bill.

(3) House and Senate Conference

Differences between the bills approved by each Chamber of Congress are reconciled in formal conferences by a Committee composed of representatives from each Chamber. Only the differences in the bills become Conference items. The Committee attempts to reach acceptable compromises. The Committee's Report is submitted to each Chamber for approval.

If each Chamber accepts the Report, the bill is sent to the President for his signature. If either Chamber does not accept the Report, then there is no current authorization for the specified program.

Appropriations

The appropriations process provides the money for the programs whose budgets have been approved by the Authorization process. The appropriations process is similar to the authorization process.

One important difference, however, is that there is only one Appropriations Committee in the House and one Appropriations Committee in the Senate. Each of the Committees has thirteen subcommittees with specified jurisdictions. The subcommittees are the same in both Chambers.

These subcommittees are:

- Agriculture, Rural Development and Related Agencies
- Commerce, Justice, State, the Judiciary and Related Agencies
- Defense
- District of Columbia
- Energy and Water Development
- Foreign Operations
- HUD-Independent Agencies
- Interior
- Labor, Health and Human Services and Education
- Legislative
- Military Construction
- Transportation
- Treasury-Postal Service and General Government.

By long-standing tradition, the House Subcommittees initiate the Appropriations bills. The steps in the appropriations process are the same as for the Authorizations. There are subcommittee and Committee Hearings, floor votes by each Chamber on their respective bills, and a Conference Committee Report to be approved by both Chambers.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Appropriations:
Annual expenditures determined by Congress in a process which is separate from the authorizing process. Appropriations are required to be within guidelines set forth by the authorizing legislation for each particular program but do not necessarily total the amount permissible under the authorization bill.

Authorizations:
Legislation that establishes a program or allows a program to continue. Authorizations specify a program's general aim and conduct, and unless "open-ended", put a ceiling on monies that can be used to finance it.

Bills:
Most legislative proposals before Congress are in the form of bills, and are designated as H.R. (House of Representatives) or S. (Senate) according to the house in which they originate and by a number assigned in the order in which they were introduced, e.g., H.R. 1904 or S. 1003.

Budget:
The document sent to Congress by the President in January of each year estimating government revenue and expenditures for the next fiscal year.

Committee:
A subdivision of the House or Senate which initially prepares legislation for action. Most standing committees are divided into subcommittees, which study legislation, hold hearings, and report their recommendations to the full committee. Select or Special Committees are established for specific purposes which is usually time limited. Most such committees are investigative in nature.

Concurrent Budget Resolution:
Legislation in which Congress determines total spending and revenue levels for the federal budget. The first, which is supposed to be finished by May 1, theoretically serves as a working draft and its budget levels are not binding. The second version due by September 15 is legally binding. The bills are introduced by the Budget Committee in each Chamber.

Conference:
A meeting between the representatives of the House and Senate to reconcile differences between the two houses over provisions of a bill. Members of the Conference Committee must reach agreement on the provisions of the bill before it can be sent up for final floor action. Elaborate rules go· ern the conduct of the conferences.

Congressional Record:
The daily, printed account of proceedings in both House and Senate chambers.

Continuing Resolution:
A temporary funding measure passed by Congress to allow federal agencies to operate in cases where new appropriations have not been enacted before the old fiscal year lapses. The continuing resolution may allow an agency to continue its spending at the previous year's rate for a limited time, or it may contain more specific spending instructions, and can be renewed at the discretion of Congress.

Discretionary Program:
In contrast to entitlement programs (described below), discretionary programs are those for which Congress can establish spending ceilings. These are termed "controllable" expenditures.

Entitlement Program:
A federal program that guarantees a certain level of benefits to persons who meet the requirements set by law. It thus leaves no discretion to Congress as to how much money to appropriate. Examples of federal entitlement programs include: Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. The only method for "controlling" spending in these areas is to eliminate or reduce the scope of the program.

Filibuster:
A time-delaying tactic used by a minority in an effort to prevent a vote on a bill which probably would pass if brought to a vote.

Lobby:
A group seeking to influence the passage or defeat of legislation. The right to attempt to influence legislation is based on the First Amendment to the Constitution, which says Congress shall make no law abridging the right of the people "to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

Quorum:
The number of members whose presence is necessary for the transaction of business. In the Senate and House, it is a majority of the membership. (When there are no vacancies, this is 51 in the Senate and 218 in the House).

Rule:
The term has two specific congressional meanings. A rule may be a standing order governing the conduct of House or Senate business and listed in the chamber's book of rules. In the House, a rule also may be a decision made by its Rules Committee about the handling of a particular bill on the floor.

Veto:
Disapproval by the President of a bill or joint resolution, other than one proposing an amendment to the Constitution. When Congress is in session, the president must veto a bill within 10 days, excluding Sundays, after receiving it; otherwise it becomes law without his signature.

NOTES

Use this page to write down the names and phone numbers of your legislators for further reference.

Senator: _____
D.C. Office Phone Number: 1-202- _____
District Office: _____
District Phone: _____
Legislative Staff: _____

Senator: _____
D.C. Office Phone Number: 1-202- _____
District Office: _____
District Phone: _____
Legislative Staff: _____

Representative: _____
D.C. Office Phone Number: 1-202- _____
District Office: _____
District Phone: _____
Legislative Staff: _____

AMERICAN
HUMANE
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80112-5117
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